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Subject Libby - \$2,000,000 for Flower Creek - Article on 8-Net

David and Curtis,,

There may be other funds involved besides Removal, but the article below copied from the R8 Home Page indicates \$2,000,000 for Flower Creek.

<http://www.missoulian.com/articles/2008/03/08/news/local/news04.txt>

## **Baucus demands cleanup funding**

*By MICHAEL JAMISON of the Missoulian*

KALISPELL - Montana's top Democrat is demanding that federal environmental protection officials push for budgets big enough to thoroughly clean deadly asbestos from the town of Libby.

Earlier this month, damage at the community's Asa Wood Elementary School resulted in asbestos-laced vermiculite insulation spilling onto the ground. Children discovered the pile during recess, and reported it to teachers.

Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., called the accident an "outrage," saying "there was a pile of vermiculite sitting outside the place we send our kids to learn. Our government has failed us in Libby."

On Friday, Baucus called on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Chief Stephen Johnson to declare a "public health emergency" in Libby. Doing so would allow the town to get the resources needed to be cleaned up permanently.

"Highlighting this need is the recent news of the asbestos leak of tainted vermiculite from the wall of the Asa Wood Elementary School," Baucus wrote. "Leaving asbestos behind in the walls of any building, especially a school, is simply unconscionable. ... Without this (emergency) declaration, EPA lacks the clear authority and resources it needs to remove all of the Zonolite Attic Insulation from homes, schools and businesses in Libby."

Since the Feb. 15 spill - likely caused by an excavator clearing snow - school officials have begun talks regarding the possibility of a new facility for elementary students. In addition to the contamination problems, Asa Wood School was built as a junior high, and is not ideal for smaller children.

Coincidentally, the same day Baucus learned of the school's asbestos accident he was meeting with Johnson. At that meeting, before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Baucus pressed Johnson about why EPA is not requesting more money for Libby's cleanup.

The town is a declared Superfund site, the result of lethal asbestos being dug up alongside vermiculite at the now-defunct W.R. Grace and Co. mine. The vermiculite was widely used as building insulation, and is prevalent throughout the town.

"The people of Libby," Baucus told Johnson, "are depending on you to devote the resources necessary to right the terrible wrong committed by W.R. Grace."

Baucus, who did not know of the school accident at the time of the hearing, told Johnson that "as I look at the EPA's work plan for Libby this year, and all across EPA's budget, I am left wondering why the

administration is not asking for more funding."

The senator expressed concern that "EPA has taken the Superfund program in the wrong direction," adding that "the administration's fiscal year 2009 budget request would only continue to shortchange the people of Libby and other communities across the country dealing with Superfund sites."

The administration's proposed Superfund remediation budget, he said, represents a \$5 million decrease from last year.

"Max is going to continue to beat the drum on this," said Baucus spokesman Barrett Kaiser. "He wants a clean bill of health for Libby."

Currently, EPA cleanup crews leave asbestos inside Libby's walls, where it is contained, rather than conducting a more thorough cleaning. To date, nearly 1,000 homes have been cleaned in Libby, but much asbestos remains in those walls.

The rationale for that decision is, in large part, available funds, but Baucus insists more money could be made available if the agency and the administration would agree to declare a public health emergency for the town.

In the letter now being drafted to EPA, Kaiser said, Baucus points out that EPA hopes to spend about \$19 million in Libby during fiscal year 2008. The bulk of those dollars, about \$17 million, will go to cleaning some 160 properties, as well as continuing a risk assessment in nearby Troy. The remaining \$2 million is set aside to remove vermiculite from Flower Creek.

But such a budget schedule leaves too many priorities unfunded, Baucus has argued. The local golf course, for instance, is not on the agenda, despite some 15,000 rounds of golf played there each year, including many by the local high school team.

Analysis by EPA, the senator said, has shown significant exposure to asbestos on fairways and greens.

Cleaning the links could cost another \$2 million, though, and Baucus would like Johnson to recognize the need for that money in the agency's budget calculations.

"I asked you to work with me and let me know if EPA ever needed more money for the cleanup in Libby," Baucus told Johnson. "The administration's budget is your chance to ask."

Superfund spending is lagging, Baucus said, and with less funding the pace of cleanups has slowed nationwide.

From 1997 to 2000, EPA averaged 87 completed cleanups per year, according to the senator's staff. In 2002, the number dropped to 42. In 2003 and 2004, only 40 cleanups were completed.

Baucus is a senior member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which has jurisdiction over both EPA and the Superfund program.

"Over 200 people in Libby have died from asbestos-related disease because of W.R. Grace," Baucus told Johnson. "More are getting sick every day. The stakes could not be higher."

In addition to his latest letter to Johnson, Baucus has again introduced an "asbestos awareness resolution," hoping to designate the first week of April as National Asbestos Awareness Week.

"We're following up because we want to determine what's going to be required to fix the problem," Kaiser said. "The citizens of Libby want their town cleaned up, and so does Max."

For additional information, please contact Frank Montarelli.

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